



From mountain to sea

Doorstep Callers and Scams

Bulletin No. 71

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland, please click [here](#).

Doorstep Callers

One resident of south Aberdeenshire recently reported that he had a passing roofer knock at his door to advise him that he had a hole in his roof, a hole which the resident had no prior knowledge of. When the roofer showed the resident the roof there certainly was a sizable hole in the roof. This roofer had also been calling at nearby dwellings for a similar purpose and was accompanied by two young boys.

Becoming concerned about the hole and the implications of wet weather while the hole went unrepaired, the resident agreed to work being done to repair the hole. After some discussion the roofer was paid a four figure sum for tiles and materials by bank transfer. The roofer agreed to come back the next day to complete the work.

As agreed, next day the roofer returned but demanded an additional four figure sum to complete the work. This was paid and the work was done. After this the roofer again tried to obtain a further payment from the resident and became quite intimidating whilst doing so, but thanks fully the resident stood his ground and did not pay.

After the roofer was gone the resident inspected the repairs and was appalled by what he saw; plastic sheeting covering the hole.

Some points to note:

- Passing roofers who, acting as a Good Samaritan, stop to advise a householder of a fault with their roof, particularly one which they hadn't been aware of up to that point, is a classic tactic of a rogue trader,

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- It is possible that one of the boys had been sent up onto the roof to cause this damage prior to calling at the resident's door,
- This is another example of why you should never accept any such offer from a doorstep caller; this risk of something going wrong is simply too great,
- Never allow the caller access to the roof as this has often been when they actually cause the problem they claim to have spotted,
- Thank them for their concern and send them on their way, politely but firmly,
- Never discuss money with these callers. They will always claim they can do the work cheaper than anyone else. If they start to talk money, change the subject,
- If you do discover a fault in your roof, arrange a trader of your own to make the repairs. Details of how to do this can be found [here](#), in particular detail in Bulletin no. 63,
- If you think you have been the victim of a scam, report the matter timeously to your bank, Police Scotland and Trading Standards, so they can act quickly.

Over the months, these bulletins have highlighted a variety of ways in which doorstep callers trick householders out of substantial amounts of money. The key point to remember is to simply say "No, thanks!" and stick to your guns. It is easier in the long run to do this than to try to recover any money that's been handed over, or to repair the mess that's been left.

Scams etc.

Insurance scam

A Garioch resident area recently reported to Trading Standards that she had engaged a roofer to make some repairs to her roof. The resident explained to the roofer that the repairs had been needed for a number of years. The roofer gave the resident a four-figure quote for the work, which the resident accepted a couple of days later. The roofer re-attended the resident's home, inspected the roof once more and then advised that the work needed was more than he had originally anticipated and that it would cost the resident double the original quote.

It's worth noting that in these circumstances a competent tradesman should have been able to make a thorough assessment of the work needed on the first occasion and that this price only increased once the resident had decided to proceed and that this trader was simply profiteering out of the second quote.

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The resident advised the roofer that she simply couldn't afford the new quote, to which the roofer advised that he could take down some guttering and slates and make it look like recent storm damage and that he would support an insurance claim made by the resident to that effect, which would then pay for the roof repairs.

Thinking better of it, the resident did not go ahead with the suggestion but engaged another roofer instead and he made an excellent job for around the cost of the original quote.

This is a bit of a cautionary tale as, given the cost of living crisis, it may be tempting to go along with such a suggestion from a tradesman. However, in doing so, the moment you decide to go along with it, numerous problems arise:

- Not only is this suggestion a scam, it would also constitute a crime, namely insurance fraud,
- The moment a person agrees to go along with a suggestion like this, they become an accomplice,
- Should this matter come to light, an accomplice would be investigated by the Police, the same as the person making the suggestion, the principal,
- It's also very likely that the principal would try to convince the Police that it had been the householder's idea and that he'd only gone along with it because he needed the work,
- Penalties for this sort of scam are fairly severe with fines and community service being imposed, and the matter possibly being reported in the local newspaper,
- It's likely that if you were convicted of such a crime, you would also find it extremely difficult and expensive to obtain any form of insurance in the future.

As we can see from this example, should a tradesman make such a suggestion the only right answer is to say no and it should be possible to engage an honest tradesman to do the work for a reasonable price. Any tradesman who suggests a homeowner submits a fraudulent insurance claim should be reported to Trading Standards and the Police.

Misc.

DeliveryLaw

One topic which is of particular relevance to residents of Aberdeenshire, more so than perhaps other parts of the country, is delivery charges for packets and parcels. Many companies class the north, north-east and islands of Scotland as



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being 'remote' areas which then incur additional delivery charges, making the purchase of certain items costlier for residents in those areas than residents further south.

This is a matter which David Duguid, MP for Banff and Buchan recently raised with Kevin Hollinrake MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Business and Trade. Mr Duguid is keen that people know their rights when faced with such a situation and what to do when they feel that they are being unfairly treated by these types of companies.

Due to these very concerns, Highland Council Trading Standards department set up a website called Deliverylaw which can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The Deliverylaw website, which is currently celebrating being in existence for 5 years, provides a wealth of information for consumers and businesses on their rights and responsibilities regarding the delivery of packets and parcels to outlying areas of Scotland.

In a nutshell, there are certain types of information which a trader (seller) must provide a consumer (customer). These are:

- Where a delivery charge applies, the trader must inform the consumer of this fact as well as stating the amount of the charge,
- The trader must also provide information to the consumer about arrangements for delivery, including the time by which they will deliver the goods,
- For distance contracts (made online, over the phone etc.) and off-premises contracts (made away from the trader's premises such as at a consumer's home) where the consumer has the right to cancel the order, the trader must provide information to the consumer on the procedure about how to cancel,
- In cases where the trader cannot reasonably calculate delivery charges in advance, they should inform the consumer that there will be a delivery charge, but these types of cases are likely to be rare.

If you would like more information about delivery charges visit the Consumer Advice Scotland website by clicking [here](#) or the Deliverylaw website by clicking [here](#). Alternatively, you can contact your local Trading Standards office. Contact details for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Trading Standards can be found at the end of this Bulletin.

[Trading Standards Scotland survey](#)

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Trading Standards Scotland recently ran a survey on the top doorstep scams in Scotland. We thought that our readers might be interested in the outcome of the survey. The results were:

SCAM – We're offering free roof surveys – you might be eligible for government funding for new insulation,

SCAM – I was passing and noticed that your roof needs some urgent repair work,

SCAM – I work for an energy company – we're offering grants for new boilers,

SCAM – We're offering a special deal on gardening – it's only available today,

SCAM – I work for a telecoms company – can I come in to check your Wi-Fi speed?

SCAM – We have some tarmac left over from a job – we can resurface your driveway for a discount.



Shut out Scammers

Trading Standards Scotland

POLICE SCOTLAND
SHIRAZI GREEN WAY
POILIAS ALBA

Top Doorstep Scams 2023:

- SCAM: "We're offering free roof surveys - you might be eligible for government funding for new insulation"
- SCAM: "I was passing and noticed that your roof needs some urgent repair work"
- SCAM: "I work for an energy company - we're offering grants for new boilers"
- SCAM: "We're offering a special deal on gardening - it's only available today"
- SCAM: "I work for a telecoms company - can I come in to check your Wifi speed?"
- SCAM: "We have some tarmac left over from a job - we can resurface your driveway for a discount"

Report suspicious behaviour to Police Scotland on 101, or 999 in an emergency
Report scams to Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or at [consumeradvice.scot](https://www.consumeradvice.scot)
Sign up to receive Neighbourhood Watch Scotland Alerts at neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk



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Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> or Take Five at <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found at:
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>